



Rangeley Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Rangeley, Maine

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An Open and Affirming Church
A Candlelight Festival of Story and Carols

December 24, 2024

5:00 PM

Meditation

"It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you."

Mother Teresa

ORDER OF WORSHIP

OUR GATHERING AND PRAISE

RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE *"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"*

Traditional Carol/Arr. Mark Hayes

WELCOME

Liturgist

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader & All

Like the shepherds, we come to the stable,
uncertain of what we have heard and seen,
longing to hear a word of peace and joy.

Like the wise ones, we have journeys to make,
gifts to offer, and hope in our hearts,
that this world can change for the better.

Here, in the stillness of a winter's night,
we gather to share the light of Christ,
a light that shines in the nightfall.

**We gather in the wonder of this night
to share our joy and thanks for new life.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

*GATHERING CAROL

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

O come, all ye faithful, joyful, and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Reader: Beloved, today we welcome the Christ Child, the fulfillment of our joy, as we proclaim with the prophet Isaiah, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Unison: Christ our joy has come near. Emmanuel, God with us, has come to dwell with us as a tiny baby. "His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this" (Isaiah 9:7).

Light the four outer candles of the Advent wreath.

Reader: We light this candle as a sign of Christ coming to dwell with us, to live in the neighborhood of vulnerable humanity as a vulnerable child. May the light of Christ warm our hearts and light our way as we share the joy of God's salvation wherever we go.

The Christ candle is lit.

CAROL

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold!
Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven's all gracious King!
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When, with the ever-circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

CHRISTMAS EVE REFLECTION

CAROL

"Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for His bed.
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.

CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

O God, Emmanuel, indeed you are with us,
for we have heard the promise of the prophets.
We have caught the notes of the angels' song.
We have seen a star in the heavens and we, too,
believe.

Tonight we have come to be with you because you have come to be with us.

Tonight we seek an innocent, helpless baby in a crude manger.

Tonight we seek a Messiah who will reign with justice and compassion.

In love you have sought us. By your grace we have been found.

Beginning tonight, may we love each other with renewed conviction, remembering all that you have done for us.

Tonight, let us resoundingly proclaim the Good News that God's love,

incarnate in our Savior Jesus Christ, is born again.

OUR LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY MUSIC *"Do You Hear What I Hear?"*

Regney and Shayne/Arr. Harry Simeone

Our offerings this night will go to the UCC Christmas Fund, one of our 5-for-5 Annual Offerings.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY: A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND
CAROLS

Reading: Luke 2:1-7 The Journey to Bethlehem and the Birth
of the Child

CAROL

"What Child Is This?"

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary

Why lies he in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary.

Reading: Luke 2:8-12 The Announcement to the Shepherds

CAROL

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of
wondering love.

O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!

Reading: Luke 2:13-14

The Gloria

CAROL

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see Him
whose birth the angels sing; Come,
adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Reading: Luke 2:15-20 The Shepherds' Visit to the Holy Child

CAROL

"Joy to the World! the Lord is Come"

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her king;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature
Sing, And heaven and nature sing, and heaven,
And heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the savior reigns;
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love, And wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders, of his love.

A CHRISTMAS BENEDICTION

SHARING OF THE LIGHT

Please remember that the lighted candle remains upright, and the unlighted candle is tipped to be lit. At the conclusion of Silent Night, our service is concluded and you may leave in peace.

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

*A joyful welcome to both nearby and far away visitors and guests!
We bless you with joyful wishes for a very Merry Christmas! Please come
and worship with us again! May your Christmas be blessed!*

~Special Thanks to all who participating in preparing and offering our service tonight. We thank our readers tonight:

- Lucy Simonds **Leading our Christmas Eve Service**
- Les Hoekstra, **Liturgist & Reader**
- Hillary Sunderland, **Reader**
- Rick Baker, **Deacon of the Evening**
- Lucy Simonds, **Zoomigo**
- Janice Bredeau, Matt, Dene', and Lily Stevens, **lighting of the Advent wreath**
- Erin Smith for **tonight's special music.**

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